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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. SHAW].

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 18, 1995.

I hereby designate the Honorable CLAY SHAW to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of May 12, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leaders limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

LEARNING THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, the famous admonition that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it is often put another way: We must learn the lessons of the past to prevent making similar mistakes in the future. When it comes to the safety of the Nation's blood supply, this simple adage translates into a message of life and death. We know that during the early 1980's blood and blood products became tainted with the virus that causes AIDS. The early clues that there was a problem manifested themselves in the hemophilia community, because people with hemophilia frequently use products made from blood that is pooled from thousands of donors. We now know that during the early 1980's, approximately one-half of the Nation's hemophiliacs—some 8,000 people—became infected with the virus that causes AIDS through the use of contaminated blood-clotting products.

How did this happen? Why did the system that was established to safeguard the supply of blood and blood products fail to heed early warning signs and prove so slow to respond to a dangerous threat? How can we prevent such a tragedy from happening again? More than 2 years ago, I joined with Senators GRAHAM of Florida and KENNEDY of Massachusetts in asking HHS Secretary Donna Shalala to conduct a review of the events surrounding this medical disaster. The results of that intensive and objective review have come to us in the form of a report, presented last week by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine—the IOM. The conclusions of this report are important—not just for their candor in describing the quote ''Failure of leadership and inadequate institutional decisionmaking processes'' unquote to meet the challenge of a deadly new blood-borne disease—but also for their recommended changes to the system.

In underscoring the Federal Government's shared responsibility for the safety of the blood supply, the report concludes that the FDA—which has regulatory authority over blood and blood products—quote ''Consistently chose the least aggressive option that was justifiable.'' On several occasions, the report found, the FDA quote ''Did not adequately use its regulatory authority and therefore missed opportunities to protect the public health.'' Unquote. And it notes that decisionmakers acted with an abundance of caution, seeking to engender quote ''a minimum of criticism.'' Unquote. All of these observations led the IOM to recommend a series of changes in the way the FDA regulates blood and blood products—and improvements in Public Health Service structure to yield early and aggressive response to new threats to the blood supply.

The IOM panel also proposes a no-fault compensation program prospectively for future victims of adverse consequences from the use of blood and blood products. But what about the 8,000 victims of the tragedy that has already happened? Although this question was beyond its purview, the IOM suggested that its prospective recommendation quote ''Might serve to guide policymakers as they consider whether to implement a compensation system for those infected in the 1980's'' unquote. And so I ask my colleagues to consider H.R. 1023, a bill I introduced in February that now has 110 bipartisan cosponsors. The Ricky Ray Hemophilia Relief Fund Act named for a victim from my old congressional district, as it is known, establishes a compensation program for the victims of hemophilia-associated AIDS. It is based on the premise that has now been supported by the IOM report, that Government shares responsibility for what happened. It is also based on the understanding that blood and blood products are unique—as is the Federal responsibility for them.

We have a national blood policy, put in place in the mid-1970's, that says we have a commitment to a safe supply of blood and blood products. In fact, as part of our recognition that these are unique resources deserving special consideration, we have placed the regulation of blood and blood products under the aegis of two separate laws. Mr. Speaker, as we learn from the mistakes of the past, let us be sure we stand up to our obligations for them. I urge my

colleagues to review H.R. 1023 and I hope that the Judiciary Committee will soon hold hearings on this important matter of fair play, as I have now requested. We cannot undo the damage, but we can restore some faith and provide some relief to victims and their loved ones. That would be a good way to go forward.

REMARKS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. OLVER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, I wish to address my remarks to the President of the United States today.

Mr. President, you have taken some truly courageous stands in foreign policy. Your finest hour, I think, came when you insisted that Haiti get its chance at democracy. You insisted that the military junta, which had overthrown the first freely elected President in Haiti's history, must leave. There was nothing to be gained politically. All the polls said not 3 percent of Americans thought we should get involved in Haiti, and there was great risk to American lives. But you did it because it was right.

And your courageous decision to recognize Vietnam, what a gutsy thing to do, the right thing to do. But you will be vilified to your dying day by those who want to prolong the agony of the division which the Vietnam war caused in America. Never mind that 25 years have passed. Never mind that the MIA's from World War II numbered more than all the dead in Vietnam, yet Germany and Japan were our closest allies 25 years after the Second World War. Never mind that very prominent, decorated heroes of that war confirm your decision is the right one.

''The War Is Over. Life Goes On.'' That is the title of a poignant column by William Broyles, Jr., in the New York Times on Sunday, July 16. Mr. Speaker, I will place the text of that column in the RECORD, which is about Vietnam, but also about Bosnia.

[From the New York Times, July 16, 1995]

''THE WAR IS OVER. LIFE GOES ON''

(By William Broyles, Jr.)

Representative Randy Cunningham burst into tears last week at a Congressional hearing on the recognition of Vietnam. Mr. Cunningham, a California Republican who had been shot down as a Navy pilot in Vietnam, was so overcome with emotion describing the deaths of his comrades that he could not go on. When he recovered, he charged that President Clinton was morally wrong to recognize the former enemy.

Any one of us who fought in Vietnam knows the emotions Randy Cunningham must have felt: the deep grief and anger, the sense of loss, the pride, the whole confusing mess. I have wept, been to the wall on the Capitol Mall, traced the names of the fallen, sought out my old comrades, worked with troubled vets, helped build memorials and led parades.

I feel for the families of the 2,000 or so Americans still unaccounted for. But Randy Cunningham's tears leave me cold. The grief we veterans share should be above partisan politics. It is purer, more honorable and lasting. And it is personal. Tears and emotion in politics fuel partisan suspicions and revenge.

Public emotion has turned Vietnam into a haunting specter that has often sapped our military will. Bosnia is our greatest failure of collective security since Munich because we are afraid of repeating the mistakes of Vietnam. But Nazi aggression had little to do with the post-colonial war in Vietnam, which in turn has little to do with Bosnia. The Balkan tragedy does, however, have a lot to do with Munich. Because our memories are so faint and our emotions so vivid, we persist in applying the lessons of the wrong wars. We must put Vietnam behind us.

The Vietnam veterans who support recognition have impeccable credentials: Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, was a P.O.W.; Senator John Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, won the Navy Cross; Senator Bob Kerrey, Democrat of Nebraska, won the Medal of Honor and left part of a leg in Vietnam. Does their support for recognition mean they are betraying their comrades who are still missing?

That is the hardest question, because the deep, uncompromising rule of the soldier is not to leave your comrades on the battlefield. But the fighting has been over for 20 years. Our battlefields are rice paddles now, tilled by men and women not even born when the guns fell silent. There were more M.I.A.'s in World War II than the total number of Americans killed in Vietnam. Thousands remain unaccounted for after the Korean War. We should continue to try to account for everyone. But the time has come to do so in cooperation with our old enemies.

The reason why is in the mirror. Look at us. Our hair is gray, what little there is. Some of us are grandfathers now. Many of us went to war 30 years ago. Thirty years! That's the time between the start of World War I and the end of World War II. In those earlier 30 years, more than 100 million people died. Millions perished in death camps. Millions more died and were never found. Tens of millions were homeless. The maps of Europe and Asia were redrawn. Whole countries disappeared.

In comparison, Vietnam is a footnote. Yet we can't get beyond it—supposedly because we lost. But our countryside wasn't ripped with bombs, our forests defoliated, our cities pulverized, our people herded into camps. We had casualties, but we did not have millions of refugees and more than a million dead. We weren't thrown into the sea as the British were at Dunkirk.

I never felt defeated. I just felt wasted. I would have fought in World War II. I would fight today in Bosnia. But where I fought was in Vietnam.

And by now the only true response by a soldier should be this: tough. As we said in Vietnam, it don't mean nothing. Which meant, it means everything, but what can you do? In war people die. Sometimes the best people die. We want there to be a reason. Sometimes there is, sometimes there isn't. War is messy and unfair. That's why it needs a clear purpose. There was no clear purpose in Vietnam. There is one in Bosnia.

Ten years ago, I visited the site of the base where I had been a Marine lieutenant, just west of Da Nang. I went with a man named Hien, who had been a company commander in the Vietcong. We had fought each other up and down the rice paddies, mountains and in the jungles. Almost all his comrades were dead or missing.

It was hard not to respect our enemies. They had been bombed by B–52's, bombarded with shells hurled by battleships, incinerated by napalm and white phosphorous, drenched in defoliants. They had no R & R and no Medivacs. They lived in tunnels and caves, never going home and getting no letters for as many as 10 years.

Hien and I met a woman whose husband had been killed where I had fought. She never found his body. Most likely we bulldozed him into a mass grave. That's what we did. We incinerated them, buried them alive, pushed them from helicopters. And they did their best to kill us. That's what happens in a war. What should happen after a war is what the woman said after we had talked long enough to realize her husband had been killed by my platoon, possibly by me. ''That was long ago,'' she told me. ''The war is over. Life goes on.''

The Vietnamese have hundreds of thousands of M.I.A.'s. Soldiers trying to find the bodies of their lost comrades is a constant theme in Vietnamese novels and films. Their families grieve no less than ours. They know better than anyone the pain we feel. We should all search together for the answers that would help families on both sides finally end this.

I loved the men I fought beside. I feel pride in their courage and unselfishness. But the time has come to say to all my buddies who are missing, as we say to those names on the wall, rest in peace. You did your best. We miss you terribly.

We fought to make Vietnam free and independent. Today it is independent. And if we engage its leaders diplomatically with the same will we showed against the Soviet Union, it will become more free. To recognize Vietnam is not to dishonor the memory of our fallen or missing comrades. It is to recognize the truth. The war is over.

Mr. Speaker, why is it so hard to do the right thing in Bosnia? Granted, you inherited the disastrous American position and policy in Bosnia's version of the Holocaust from George Bush after 20 months of inaction by the European Community, the United Nations, NATO and the United States about the most vicious war in Europe in 50 years. Granted that the pattern of the United Nations issuing resolutions, which it turned out it had no intention of enforcing and which has led to the total and abject humiliation and discredit of the United Nations, had already been set. Granted that the moral and strategic error of the arms embargo placed on only one side in the conflict, placed on the elected government of Bosnia, a sovereign nation, a member of the United Nations, had already been made.

You had a reasonable, credible proposal: Lift and strike. Remember lift and strike? It would be a vast improvement today over the unconscionable cowardice of the Western democracies toward Bosnia. However the United Nations, the European Community, and the United States twist and squirm, the fact remains that Slobodan Milosevic, the last Communist dictator in Europe, has orchestrated the destruction of the most evenly multireligious, multiethnic, multicultural state in Europe, using the most vicious and unspeakable tactics since the Holocaust.

The Serbs have shown that no tactic is beneath them. Ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, destruction of hundreds of mosques and Roman Catholic